

Message Text

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WHITE HOUSE PLEASE PASS SAM 86970

HEREWITH EXCERPTS FROM LESLIE H. GELB BY-LINER PAGE THREE
NEW YORK TIMES THURSDAY, JANUARY 17 HEADED "U.S. FORMING
NEW POLICY AS ARMS TALKS APPROACH":

WASHINGTON, JAN. 17 -- THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION IS
NEARING AN INTERNAL COMPROMISE ON NUCLEAR ARMS POLICY,
FORMULATING NEW BUDGET REQUESTS FOR A VAST ARRAY OF STRATE-
GIC WEAPONS, ALONG WITH PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED IN ARMS
TALKS WITH MOSCOW TO RESTRICT OR BAN MOST OF THE SAME
WEAPONS.

THE TALKS, WHICH WILL DEAL WITH THE LIMITATION OF
STRATEGIC ARMS, ARE TO RESUME ON JAN. 31.

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SENIOR OFFICIALS SAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT TRY TO

PERSUADE CONGRESS TO AUTHORIZE THE NEW WEAPONS BY ARGUING THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS ABOUT TO OVERWHELM THE UNITED STATES IN NUCLEAR WEAPONRY, AS ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS DID DURING THE DEBATE OVER AN ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEM IN 1971.

INSTEAD, THE OFFICIALS SAID THAT THEY WOULD ARGUE THAT THE PRESIDENT NEEDS A CHOICE BETWEEN WEAPONS FOR ALL-OUT AND FOR LIMITED NUCLEAR WAR TO PREVENT MOSCOW FROM GAINING A FUTURE DIPLOMATIC ADVANTAGE. THEY SAY THAT THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT NOW HAVE SUCH A CHOICE.

THESE OFFICIALS IMPLIED AND SOVIET SOURCES HAVE HINTED THAT EACH SIDE WOULD PRESENT NEW PROPOSALS IN THE STALLED TALKS IN VIENNA ON LIMITING STRATEGIC ARMS.

THE NEW BUDGET REQUEST FOR NUCLEAR ARMS, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO TOTAL 19-BILLION, IS REGARDED AS A TYPICAL BUREAUCRATIC COMPROMISE. THE PENTAGON IS TO GET THE NEW ARMS, AT LEAST CONTINGENTLY. AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS TO GET FLEXIBILITY IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH MOSCOW TO BAN, LIMIT OR REDUCE MOST OF THESE ARMS.

SENATE CRITICS OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S ARMS POLICY SAY THAT THIS KIND OF COMPROMISE IS BAD. THEY CHARGE THAT ONCE NEW WEAPONS ARE BUILT, THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO AGREE TO KEEP THEM THAN TO BAN THEM.

THE AMERICAN POSITION FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS IS NOT YET FULLY SET, ACCORDING TO SENIOR OFFICIALS. BUT THEY REPORT THAT BARGAINING WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAD BEEN CONDUCTED ON PHILOSOPHICAL LINES FOR MONTHS, HAS NOW GOTTEN DOWN TO SPECIFICS. AFTER TWO MONTHS' DELAY, MEETINGS OF TWO HIGH-LEVEL PANELS HAVE BEEN CALLED BY SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER TO IRON OUT THE AMERICAN POSITION.

THE REMAINING DIFFERENCES WITH THE ADMINISTRATION WERE SAID TO BE MAINLY ALONG MILITARY-CIVILIAN LINES, BUT BOTH SIDES WERE REPORTED TO SHARE CONCERN OVER THE GROWING

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SOVIET ABILITY TO STRIKE A SEVERE BLOW AT LAND-BASED MINUTEMEN MISSILES OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE TALKS ENDED IN 1972 WITH A TREATY LIMITING ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILES AND AN AGREEMENT, LASTING UNTIL 1977, FREEZING OFFENSIVE MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM LAND OR SEA TO 1,764 FOR THE UNITED STATES AND 2,568 FOR THE SOVIET UNION.

THE UNITED STATES ACCEPTED TEMPORARY INFERIORITY IN NUMBERS AND PAYLOAD BECAUSE IT RETAINED TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY; THE RUSSIANS, IN TURN, WERE PUTTING THEMSELVES IN POSITION TO CLOSE THE TECHNOLOGY GAP WHILE KEEPING THE ADVANTAGE IN NUMBERS.

THE PRESENT PHASE OF THE TALKS IS INTENDED TO DEAL WITH MODERNIZATION PROGRAMS ON BOTH SIDES AND TO MAKE THE INTERIM AGREEMENT PERMANENT.

OTHER POINTS CONCERNING THE ARMS TALKS THAT SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS MADE IN INTERVIEWS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

WASHINGTON IS WILLING TO CONSIDER EITHER OVER-ALL OR PARTIAL AGREEMENTS LIMITING OFFENSIVE WEAPONS. PREVIOUSLY THE UNITED STATES HAD NO AGREED POSITION ON THIS POINT.

A UNITED STATES AGREEMENT TO CONTROL THE PRACTICE OF PUTTING ON A SINGLE MISSILE SEVERAL WARHEADS THAT CAN BE AIMED AT SEPARATE TARGETS MUST BE TIED TO SOVIET UNION'S WILLINGNESS TO LOWER ITS MISSILE PAYLOAD CAPACITY.

MOSCOW STILL REFUSES TO CONCEDE THAT ITS "HEAVY" MISSILES, WITH PAYLOADS FAR IN EXCESS OF UNITED STATES MISSILES AND WITH THE ABILITY TO HOUSE MANY MULTIPLE WARHEADS, THREATEN THE MINUTEMAN FORCE.

TO COPE WITH THE DIFFICULTIES OF CHECKING ON MISSILE DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON WANTS TO PROHIBIT THE SYSTEMATIC TESTING OF EXISTING MISSILES BECAUSE NEW MISSILE HEADS CONTAINING MORE SOPHISTICATED GUIDANCE SYSTEMS AND WARHEADS CAN BE FITTED ON OLD ROCKETS, MAKING IT DIFFICULT
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TO DETECT THE IMPROVEMENT.

SENIOR UNITED STATES OFFICIALS NOW BELIEVE THAT IMMEDIATE PROGRESS IN THE TALKS WILL DEPEND UPON WASHINGTON'S NOT INSISTING ON PRECISE NUMERICAL EQUALITY IN MISSILES; IN EXCHANGE, IT IS HOPED, MOSCOW WILL DROP ITS INSISTENCE THAT TACTICAL AMERICAN AIRCRAFT STATIONED IN AND AROUND EUROPE AND CAPABLE OF STRIKING SOVIET TERRITORY WITH NUCLEAR BOMBS BE INCLUDED IN THE AGREEMENT.

(REMAINDER OF ARTICLE FOCUSES ON SPECULATIONS OF SIZE AND SCOPE OF BUDGET REQUESTS FOR STRATEGIC FORCES AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS OF ABOUT 19 BILLION. CONCLUDES: "THERE IS A GENERAL AGREEMENT WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION THAT THE PRESIDENT MUST HAVE NUCLEAR FLEXIBILITY. THIS

MEANS THAT IN THE EVENT OF A SOVIET ATTACK AGAINST THE
MINUTEMAN FORCE THE PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE MISSILES THAT

CAN STRIKE BACK AT THE SOVIET MISSILES RATHER THAN AT
SOVIET CITIES. THIS SO-CALLED COUNTERFORCE STRATEGY IS
EXPECTED TO MEET RESISTENCE IN CONGRESS. SOME SENATORS
DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MISSILES CAN BE LAUNCHED AGAINST
MISSILES WITHOUT CAUSING MILLIONS OF CIVILIAN DEATHS.
SOURCES WHO TAKE PART IN ADMINISTRATION MEETINGS SAY THAY
HAVE FOCUSED ON THREE MAIN ISSUES." NOTE - ARTICLE
BREAKS OFF HERE WITHOUT LISTING ISSUES).

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